

**F**ERTES, I wolde pleten with thee a fewethinges, usinge the wordes of fortune; tak hede now thyself, yif that she axeth right: O thou man, wherfore mak-est thou me guilty by thyne everydayes pleyninges? What wrong have I don thee? What goodes have I bireft thee that weren thyne? Stryf or plete with me, biforn what juge that thou wolt, of the possession of richesses or of dignitees. And yif thou mayst shewen me that ever any mortal man hath received any of tho thinges to ben hise in propre, than wol I graunte frely that alle thilke thinges weren thyne whiche that thou axest. When that nature broughte thee forth out of thy moder wombe, I received thee naked and nedy of alle thinges, and I norisshe thee with my richesses, and was redy and ententif through my favour to susteyne thee; and that maketh thee now impacient ayeins me; and I envyrounde thee with alle the aboundance and shyninge of alle goodes that ben in my right. Now it lyketh me to withdrawn my hand; thou hast had grace as he that hath used of foreine goodes: thou hast no right to pleyne thee, as though thou haddest outrelly forlorn alle thy thinges. Why pleyneest thou thanne? I have done thee no wrong. Richesses, honours, and swiche other thinges ben of my right. My servautes knowen me for hir lady; they comen with me, & departen when I wende. I dar wel affermen hardily, that yif tho thinges of which thou pleyneest that thou hast forlorn, hadde ben thyne, thou ne hadde not lorn hem. Shal I thanne only ben defended to usen my right?

**F**ERTES, it is leveful to the hevne to make clere dayes, & after that, to coveren tho same dayes with derke nightes. The yeer hath eek leve to apparailen the visage of the erthe, now with floures and now with fruit, & to confounden hem somtyme with reynes and with coldes. The see hath eek his right to ben somtyme calme & blaudishing with smothe water, and somtyme to ben horrible with wawes and with tempestes. But the covetise of men, that may nat ben stanchid, shal it binde me to ben stedefast, sin that stedefastnesse is uncouth to my maneres? Swich is my strengthe, & this pley I pleye continually. I tome the whirling wheel with the torninge cercle; I am glad to chaungen the lowest to the heyest, and the

heyest to the lowest. Worth up, if thou wolt, so it be by this lawe, that thou ne holdenat that I do thee wronge though thou descende adoun, when the resoun of my pley axeth it.

**I**STEST thou nat how Cresus, the king of Lydiens, of whiche king Cyrus was ful sore agast a litel biforn, that this rewliche Cresus was caught of Cyrus and lad to the fyr to ben brent, but that a rayn descendede down fro hevne that rescowede him? And is it out of thy minde how that Paulus, consul of Rome, when he hadde taken the king of Perciens, weep pitously for the captivitee of the self kinge? What other thing bi- the dedes of fortune, that with an unwar stroke overturneth realmes of grete nobley? *Glose.* Tragedie is to seyn, a citee of a prosperitee for a tyme, that endeth in wretchednesse.

**E**RNEDEST nat thou in Grece, when thou were yonge, that in the entree, or in the celere, of Jupiter, ther ben couched two tonnes; that on is ful of good, that other is ful of harm? What right hast thou to pleyne, yif thou hast taken more plenteuously of the goode syde, that is to seyn, of my richesses and prosperites; and what eek if I ne be nat al departed fro thee? What eek yif my mutabilitee yiveth thee rightful cause of hope to han yit beter thinges? Natheles dismyge thee nat in thy thought; and thou that art put in the comune realme of alle, ne desyre nat to liven by thyne only propre right.

Metre II.

*Si quantas rapidis flatibus incitus.*

**T**HOUGH Plente, that is good, desse of richesses, hielde adoun with ful horn, and with draweth nat hir hand, as many richesses as the see torneth upward sandes when it is moeved with ravissching blastes, or elles as many richesses as ther shynen brighte sterres on hevne on the sterry nightes; yit, for al that, mankinde nolde not cese to wepe wretchede pleyntes. And al be it so that God receyveth gladly hir preyers, and yiveth them (as fool large) moche gold, & aparailleth covetous men with noble or clere honours; yit semeth hem haven ygeten nothing, but alwey hir cruel ravynne, devouringe al that they han geten, sheweth other gapinges; that is to seyn, gapen and desyren yit after mo richesses. What brydles mighten withholden, to any certain ende, the desordene covetise of men, when ever the rather that it fleteth in large yiftes, the more ay brenneth in hem the thurst of

havinge? Certes he that, quakinge & dredful, weneth himselfen nedy, he ne liveth nevermore riche.

Prose III.

*Hic igitur si pro se tecum fortuna loqueretur.*

**F**OR, yif that fortune spake with thee for herself in this manere, forsothe thou ne haddest nat what thou mightest answer. And, if thou hast anything wherwith thou mayest right-fully defenden thy compleint, it behoveth thee to shewen it; & I wol yeven thee space to tellen it.

**E**RTEYNLY, quod I thanne, thise beeth faire thinges, & encoited with hony swetenesse of rethorike and musike; and only whyl they ben herd they ben delicious. But to wrecches is a dep- per felinge of harm; this is to seyn, that wrecches felen the harmes that they suffer more greuously than the remedies or the delites of thise wordes mowen gladen or comforten hem; so that, when thise thinges stinten for to sounne in eres, the sorwe that is inset greveth the thought.

**R**IGHT so is it, quod she, for thise ne ben yit none remedies of thy maladye; but they ben a maner norisshe- inges of thy sorwe, yit rebel ayein thy curacioun. For when that tyme is, I shal moeve swiche thinges that percen herself depe. But natheles, that thou shalt not wilne to leten thyself a wrecche, hast thou foryeten the number and the manere of thy welefulnesse? I holde me stille, how that the soverayne men of the citee token thee in cure and kepinge, when thou were orphelin of fader and moder, and were chosen in a finitee of princes of the citee; and thou bi- gunne rather to be leef and dere than for to ben a neigbbour; the whiche thing is the most precious kinde of any propinquitee or aliaunce that may ben. Who is it that ne seide tho that thou were right weleful, with so grete a nobleye of thy fadres in lawe, and with the chastitee of thy wyf, and with the oportunitie and noblesse of thy mas- culin children, that is to seyn, thy sonnes? And over al this, me list to passen the comune thinges, how thou haddest in thy youthe dignitees that weren werned to olde men. But it delyteth me to comen now to the singuler uphepinge of thy weleful- nesse. Yif any fruit of mortal thinges may han any weichte or prys of welefulnesse, mightest thou ever foryeten, for any charge

of harm that mighte bifalle, the remem- braunce of thilke day that thou saye thy two sonnes maked conseileres, and ylad to gedere fro thyn house under so greet as- semblie of senatoures & under the blythe- nesse of poeple; and when thou saye hem set in the court in here chayeres of digni- tees? Thou, rethorien or pronouncere of kinges preysinges, deservedest glorie of wit and of eloquence, when thou, sittinge bitwene thy two sonnes, conseileres, in the place that highte Circo, fulfuldest the a- bydinge of the multitude of poeple that was sprad abouten thee, with so large prey- singe & laude, as men singen in victories. Tho yave thou wordes to fortune, as I trowe, that is to seyn, tho fessedest thou fortune with glosinge wordes & deceived- est hir, when she acoyede thee and noris- shede thee as hir owne delyces. Thou bere away of fortune a yifte, that is to seyn, swiche guerdoun, that she never yaf to privee man. Wilt thou therfor leye a reken- inge with fortune? She hath now twinkled first upon thee with a wikkede eye. Yif thou considere the noubre and the manere of thy blisses and of thy sorwes, thou mayst nat forsaken that thou art yit blisful. For if thou therfor wenest thyself nat weleful, for thinges that tho semeden joyful ben passed, ther nis nat why thou sholdest wene thyself a wrecche; for thinges that semen now sorwe passen also.

**A**RT thou now comen first, a sodein gest, into the shadwe or tabernacle of this lyf; or trowest thou that any stedefastnesse be in mannes thinges, when ofte a swift houre dissolveth the same man; that is to seyn, when the soule departeth fro the body? For, although that selde is ther any feith that fortunous thinges wolen dwellen, yit natheles the laste day of amannes lyf is a manere deeth to fortune, and also to thilke that hath dwelt. And therfor, what, wenestow, thar thee recche, yif thou forlete hir in dey- inge, or elles that she, fortune, forlete thee in fleeing away?

Metre III.

*Cum polo Phebus roseis quadrigis.*

**W**HAN Phebus, the sonne, bi- ginneth to spreden his cleer- nesse with rosene chariettes, thanne the sterre, ydimmed, paleth hir whyte cheres, by the flambe of the sonne that overcometh the sterrelight. This is to seyn, when the sonne is risen, the dey- sterre wexeth pale, and leseth hir light for the grete brightnessse of the sonne.